



**A STUDY OF RECURRENT SYMBOLS  
IN T. S. ELIOT'S EARLY POETRY**

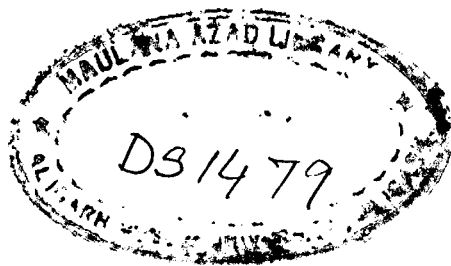
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IN  
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**BY  
(MISS) NOOR TALAT**

**Under the supervision of  
Z. A. USMANI  
READER**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
AND MODERN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES  
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY  
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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH & MODERN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES



ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY  
ALIGARH—202 002 (India)

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Certified that Miss Noor Talat has worked under my supervision, and the dissertation entitled. 'A study of Recurrent Symbols in T.S. Eliot's Early poetry', being submitted for the award of M.Phil in English, is her own work. It has not been submitted in supplication of any other degree.

*Z.A. Usmani*  
28.4.89

( Z.A. Usmani )  
Reader  
Dept. of English,  
AMU., Aligarh.

## PREFACE

T.S. Eliot ( 1888 - 1965 ) is often identified with a whole era of modern poetry. He is the great poetic genius who invented the language, the idiom for the expression of the changed modern sensibility. The complexity, concentration and comprehensiveness of his poetry makes him the most intense poetic consciousness of the twentieth century. He has written the two greatest poems - shall we call them epics? — of the twentieth century: The Waste Land and Four Quartets.

The present study is intended to study the significance of the recurring symbols in Eliot's early poetry. Since a study of the entire early poetry upto The Waste Land would have been too vast to be delimited by an M.Phil. Dissertation attention is focussed here on the early poetry of the Prufock Volume only which was published in 1917.

I have tried to examine and focus on the recurring symbols used by T.S. Eliot in his early poetry in the poet's own quasi - chronological order of publication which gives to his poems and to his whole work the unity of a consistent but developing pattern. The pattern is indicative of Eliot's persistent and developing concern with exploring the possibilities of spiritual regeneration in relation to the basic human attitudes of loving or experiencing and using. For this reason the symbols associated with the various inter - related aspects of love have been called

*the Key Symbols in this Dissertation. Other recurring symbols and images of awareness have been classified as Personal Symbols.*

*It is a pleasure to express my obligation to the Librarian Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh and the staff of the Library for extending Library facilities to me.*

*I must express my deepest sense of gratitude to Mr. Zahoor Ahmad Usmani, Reader, Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh who has been always very kind to me and gave his valuable time and precious advice and supervised my M.Phil Dissertation. As a matter of fact, I fail to find appropriate words to express my heart - felt gratitude to him.*

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NOOR TALAT

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## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in this Dissertation:

B.N.	-	Burnt Norton
Conversation	-	Conversation Galante
C.P.	-	The Cocktail Party
C.P.P.	-	The Complete Poems and Plays
D.S.	-	The Dry Salvages
E.C.	-	East Coaker
F.Q.	-	Four Quartets
La Figlia	-	La Figlia Che Piange
L.G.	-	Little Gidding
Morning	-	Morning at the Window
Portrait	-	Portrait of a Lady
Prufrock	-	The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock
Rhapsody	-	Rhapsody on a Windy Night
S.E.	-	Selected Essays

N.B.

All the textual references have been quoted from The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot, London, Faber and Faber Ltd., 1969.

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## CHAPTER - I

### INTRODUCTION

When we want to understand Eliot's poetry we first come across his epigraphs which give the hint of the theme and a clue to the understanding of his poems. After the epigraphs we have to understand the background myths against which Eliot projects his observations on modern life. Allusions should also be understood because they give depth to literary statements. The allusions, like background myths, symbols and images should be seen in relation to the thematic context which modifies their meanings.

Now, the symbols have some pre - existing meaning out of which some particular meaning is carved by the context. We must begin with certain archetypal symbols, and among them with those that keep recurring. The most important recurrent symbols in Eliot are those that are borrowed from the last cantos of Dante's Purgatorio . They are the key symbols inasmuch as understanding them gives a key to the understanding of Eliot's poetry. I.A. Richards was the first to identify them, though he wrongly understood them in terms of sex. He has described Eliot's sense of his age as a 'persistent concern with sex, the problem of our



generations as religion was the problem of the last'.<sup>1</sup> But he has wrongly understood Eliot's persistent concern and also his symbols which are related to love and not to sex. These symbols indicate the protagonist's religious willing and this willing is expressed in Eliot's poetry through emotions and feelings of love. The emotions and feelings of love which are described in his poetry can be indicated by the three words transliterated from Greek. They are Eros, Agape and Charis.

Eros represents the emotions and feelings of love which have an erotic base. It is symbolized by garden. Agape represents the emotions and feelings of love which have a sense of communal, brotherly and family sharing. It is symbolized by food - ritual. Charis represents the emotions and feelings of love which arise when God touches the soul. It is symbolized by light, music and restoring water. But we are talking here of an ideal situation like the one we have in the last cantos of the Purgatorio . There we have the garden of earthly paradise for Eros, the Eucharistic pageant for Agape, and the light - filled, music - filled air and running water for Charis. In Eliot's early poetry we find them in their debased and perverted

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1. Richards, I.A.: Principles of literary Criticism  
p. 292

condition. Nevertheless the hints of the ideal, might - have-been situation are always there.

Like key symbols Eliot's personal symbols are very significant because they effect the development of some very special meaning through their recurrence in various contexts. Personal symbols give the common word a special and richer meaning. It is special to one man's work. Since such a symbol is capable of development it provides the poet a means of not repeating himself and also of moving into newer intersities. The poet can discover new aspects of reality and can evoke new dimensions of meaning in the most economical way using such a symbol. Such symbols reveal a radically unchanging pattern and development.

In this study of the recurrent symbols of Eliot's early poetry we propose to study the key symbols in the poems of the Prufrock volume of 1917.

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## CHAPTER - II

The first poem of this volume is The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock. In the poem the key symbols associated with the three aspects of love are - 'chambers of the sea', 'sawdust restaurants', 'cheap hotels', 'tea', 'coffee' and 'fog'. These symbols are related to the central theme of the poem. Although they are associated with sordid and debased conditions they certainly give some dim or indeterminate hints of the ideal situation.

Prufrock, a middle - aged man, wants a young girl as his paramour but he is unable to propose because of several reasons. Being an elderly man he is in the grip of a spurious sense of respectability. Therefore, it becomes difficult for him to make the required self - surrender. Indeed, proposing out of love would mean for Prufrock the surrendering of the ego, even of the whole self. He can think of love only in the romantic sense. With his romantic notions of love self - surrender in love becomes all the more difficult for him. His love is not of the right sort. It is not marked by 'ardour and selflessness and selflessness. ( Four Quartets ) or 'giving', 'sympathising' and 'control' ( The Waste Land ), which would imply a healthy combination of Eros, Agape and Charis respectively. It is merely egoistic



Prufrock says:

'I have measured out my life with coffee spoons'.

He has measured his life not in terms of meaningful actions but by the doses of coffee he can lift with his spoon to his mouth. This coffee ritual is association<sup>e d</sup> with the paraphernalia of modern fashionable but meaningless living which becomes an analogue and a symbol of the eternal, universal meaninglessness of the Prufrockian situation. Prufrock has compared his life to amorphous coffee, which suggests its formlessness. His routine of measuring it out with spoons suggests the triviality and pettifogginess of his fashionable life. The pettifogginess makes the expression of his purpose ridiculous. The coffee - spoon measure describes the preciousness of his action which is apparently very significant but, in fact, very trivial. Prufrock's actions are meticulously described. Through his actions it seems as if something important was going to happen but at the end nothing important happens. This is analogous to the futility of modern fashionable living. Prufrock's visualized task is to propose to some young woman and for this he visualizes an inadequacy in himself. This suggests the debased Agape. And that is why it 'is impossible to say just what I mean'.

Charis, which touches the lover's heart as Divine grace, is also presented in its debased conditon. Instead of the light - filled, music - filled air and water of the Dantean Earthly Paradise there is fog. It is association<sup>ed</sup> with the confused state of Prufrock's mind which is unable to find any outlet. The fog interrupts his communication. It is the opposite of divine grace. Like a cat - like animal the yellow fog:

Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains;

These actions are futile and pettifoggish. Although Charis is presented in its debased conditon, there is an ironical reminder of the might - have-been which is now an unfulfilled dream:

I have heard the mermaids singing each to each  
I do not think that they will sing to me.

So for the significance of the mermaids the following entry in the Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and symbols would be of some help;

Mermaid is a 'sea nymph', a loverly woman to the waist, the tale of a fish below. She often appears above the surface of the water combing her long hair with one hand, holding a mirror in the other. She resembles the Siren of Greek mythology, but probably originally was a Celtic deity. Some legends of

the mermaids sprang from sailor's tale in which a mermaid is associated with human calamity. In popular tradition it typifies beauty, generation, sea, sea mother, seduction, wisdom.... In the middle ages a mermaid denoted the dual nature of Christ.<sup>1</sup> The name is from Anglo Saxon mere ( Sea ).

In the light of the above entry the general meaning of 'mermaids' is the seductive but also beatific dual nature of beauty. From this general meaning the poem Prufrock carves out its own special meaning. In the context of the poem 'mermaids' should mean the seductive but also beatific or imparadising and therefore ambivalent nature of the erotic object.

The song of the mermaids can provide true Charis but the mermaids are the ambivalent allurement of beauty, and even of all reality which is both human and divine. As an erotic object the mermaids are ambivalent. They may inspire wrong love which is mere sexuality, or they may inspire right love which is both human and divine. Indeed, human love and divine love extend into one another and there is no gap between them. Eliot himself recognizes this in his essay on Baudelaire when he criticises Baudelaire for having such a gap.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Gertrude Jobes: Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and symbols p. 1093.

2. See Eliot's essay 'Baudelaire' SE, New York, 1950 p.429

The personal symbols which recur in various contexts in The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock are — 'street', 'stairs', 'eye', 'window', 'sea', 'brown', and 'yellow'. We shall do well to consider them here inasmuch as they are vital to an understanding of the poem.

We first begin with the symbol of the 'street'. The general meaning of the street is a Way. This is its unchanging pattern of meaning. Every time that the street symbol occurs in some context, some special meaning is carved out of this general pattern. In Eliot's poetry the 'street' is a Way which begins and ends in a twilight. In the early poems the meaning of the street is associated with the perspective of religion. It is the Way in the same sense in which Christ spoke of himself as 'the way' or Christianity refers to human life as a Way. In the early poems this way is clouded with despair, exhaustion, restlessness and sense of futility.

Prufrock's is a spiritual disease, conditioned by his wrong attitude towards reality. He only regards others as the object of his desire. This wrong attitude means wrong love, selfish desire, egotism and fraud. On the other hand, right love means the attitude of responsibility



towards reality and the affirmation of the otherness of things. Prufrock's inability to respond with real love implies his inability to realize and affirm the unique otherness of the other person in full knowledge of the present reality of the situation, his own and that of others. Others exist for Prufrock only as images of himself, of his own egoistic desires and preoccupations. And this situation is nothing but Hell:

Hell is oneself,  
Hell is alone, the other figures in it  
Merely projections ( The Cocktail Party, I. iii.)<sup>1</sup>

But since it means 'ardour and selflessness and self surrender',<sup>2</sup> the operation of love in all its three aspects of Eros, Agape, Charis, demands the death of the egoistic personality which becomes the 'overwhelming question' for Prufrock. Prufrock is called upon to make a surrender of his ego and to fulfil the demands of his unique situation which are contrary to his romantic desires. He cannot face 'overwhelming question'. He is fixed in his romantic desire and keeps 'twisting and turning like a dolorous flame' as Dante's Guido de Montefeltro does in the Eighth circle of Hell.

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1. CPP. Op. Cit, p. 397

2. Ibid. DS V p. 190

Prufrock is shut up in his egoistic concerns. He is afraid of the death of his egoistic self which his love - proposal would imply. Like souls in hell he is also in a submerged situation and is unable to come out of it. The submerged situation is suggested through 'sawdust restaurants with oyster - shells'.

In the following lines the 'street' symbol is associated with the possibility of facing the 'overwhelming question'. But to Prufrock the way of facing the 'question' is very tedious;

Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question.

This brings in the perspective of language. Prufrock's inability to say 'what I mean' indicates his inability to communicate. Thus The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock - which is the title of the poem is never sung. That is the irony of it.

As Prufrock is suffering from indecision he keeps putting off the making of his proposal to some other time. The infernal situation of decisionlessness is here associated with the street symbol. The symbol is associated

with futile and fruitless labour which is characteristic of Prufrock's world and against which we see him labouring to make his proposal:

And indeed there will be time  
 For the yellow fog that slides  
                                 along the street  
 Rubbing its back upon the window panes;  
 There will be time, there will be time  
 To prepare a face to meet the faces that  
   you meet;  
 There will be time to murder and create,  
 And time for all the works and days of  
   hands  
 That lift and drop a question on your plate;  
 Time for you and time for me,  
 And time yet for a hundred indecisions,  
 Before the taking of toast and tea.

Prufrock's labour is ridiculous in comparison with the hard labour of farmers described by Hesiod in his famous poem Works and Days. Prufrock's labour of hands is analogous to that of the hands of a punch - card machine that lift and drop a card on your plate and is as mechanically repetitive and trite as that. Here 'murder and create' may mean, for Prufrock at least, making decision only to unmake them.

In this way street is clouded with meaninglessness and triviality. It gives the impression of reaching towards something very important but then there is sudden recoil and collapse resulting in the revelation of trivia-

lity or triteness. Prufrock wonders:

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets  
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes  
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows?

Here despair, meaninglessness, triviality, loneliness, frustration, boredom and spiritual vacuity of a life of wrong attitudes is brought out through the 'street' symbol.

The 'meticulous' preparation for evening get together which is apparently a very important ritual is meaningless. Prufrock asks himself:

Would it have been worthwhile,  
After the sunsets and the dooryards  
and the sprinkled streets,

to say what he wants to say to the young woman. He thinks of saying something to the point. He visualizes the whole ritual of tea and cakes and ices and then himself, after this ritual, wavering on that point of saying something and not being able to say it. It makes the expression of love impossible and even ridiculous.

So, briefly, the 'street' is associated with appa-

rently important but meaningless ways of life, like those of modern fashionable living. Actually the streets polarize the pettifogginess of Prufrock's world on the one hand and his egotistic concerns and sense of respectability on the other hand. The pettifogginess makes the expression of his purpose ridiculous and challenges his ego with the setting of an impossible task for him implying the loss of respectability and death of the egoistic self itself. This is why streets lead to the 'overwhelming question'. Since Prufrock was and is afraid of this death or surrender of the egoistic self, which is hinted as the 'eternal Footman' he could not, cannot and will not be able to make the proposal to the woman and, therefore, his love - song is something that always remains unsung.

Like 'street','stairs' is a personal symbol. In the early poetry of T.S. Eliot 'stairs' is associated with some erotic assignation and encounter. And this encounter is imbued with a sense of failure. Prufrock in The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock is visualizing an amorous meeting with a young woman. He is wondering if he has the capacity and courage to make his love proposal. He is visualizing a time when he would be caught between daring and not daring. He says:

And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and, 'Do I dare?'

And when after not being able to express his love ( and  
face the 'overwhelming question' ) he visualizes that he  
would turn back and descend the stair:

With a bald spot in the middle of my hair —  
(They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!')  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to  
the chin  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a  
simple pin —  
(They will say: 'But how his arms and legs are thin!')  
Do I dare  
Disturb the universe?

Here 'descend the stair' is associated with disappointment and failure. He is not able to make the love proposal because he is conscious of his personal inadequacies and old age and the ridicule they would elicit. The consciousness of his own ridiculous inadequacy is brought out by this image of himself that he visualizes.

'Eye' is also a personal symbol. It is associated with the personal pronoun 'I' and with 'the natural wakeful life of our ego' which is 'a perceiving' ( Coriolan )<sup>1</sup>. If

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1. CPP, Op. Cit, p. 127

a man is locked up in his ego he is not able to see reality as *it* is in its unique individuality. The egoistic personality is unable to see reality and that is why there is blindness and fogginess. External reality in this case is only the image of oneself.

In The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock women look at Prufrock critically. They would fix him in a 'formulated phrase'. Prufrock says:

And I have known the eyes already, known them all -  
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
Then how should I begin  
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?

Here the 'eyes' are indifferent, critical and cruel which look with contempt and scorn and fix or pin Prufrock down like an insect which keeps wriggling on the wall. These eyes lack sympathy.

According to the general meaning of the 'window' it is something through which people look out. Its meaning is associated with the meaning of the 'eye'. Like 'eye' it enables us to have a vision and knowledge of the outward world. It is

associated with inquiry and watchfulness. 'It represents a situation or frame of reference in which the ego finds itself'.<sup>1</sup> Prufrock is not able to express himself due to his ego and sense of respectability. He is shut up in his egoism and does not want to surrender his egoistic self. The striving for expression is described again and again with an air of great significance but again and again it turns out to be something trivial and futile and collapses into desperate failure. Through 'fog' the condition of Prufrock's mind is described. The activities of the fog, for example, rubbing, licking and lingering suggest that it would do something but it

Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

From the beginning it seemed that something important was going to happen but in the end nothing happens. It turns out to be a ritual of futility.

'Window is a 'frame of reference' for the perceptions and observations of the self. This frame of reference is filled with a sense of fear, one of being crossed, ridiculed

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1.        Genesis Jones: Approach to the Purpose, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1960. p. 219



and dismissed. Witness the following lines:

Would it have been worth while  
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,  
And turning towards the window, should say:  
'That is not it at all,  
That is not what I meant, at all;

The general meaning of the 'see' is the see of life or the see of creation, which in later poetry is seen as something stirred by the creative will of God. In the early poems of Eliot we find the bottom of a silent sea. This is associated with mindless, soulless mechanical creation. Prufrock says:

I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

Due to his unfulfilled desire his life has never reached its fullness. The mermaids who are riding in the sea signify the alluring ambivalence of beauty. To Prufrock the women talking in the room now become mermaids and the world becomes a sea. Although the women in the world like mermaids in the sea are fascinating and alluring, they have also their destructive and seductive aspects. Prufrock has seen the mermaids

riding seaward on the waves  
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  
When the wind blows the water white and black.

Prufrock is suffering from frustration and disappointment. He thinks that the mermaids will not sing to him because his romantic egoistic notion of love which is centred around sex leads him into the consciousness not only of his physical inadequacy but also of his total alienation from outside reality and lack of communion with it. He has also an impotent will which also means that he does not have the right attitude of love. Right attitude of love means purification of will which he needs. He is unable to respond to outside reality in a proper way. To him a meeting of love becomes a meeting in fantasy. The women in the room are finally transformed into mermaids fascinating and alluring but indifferent and alien to him. From the mermaids the women are further metamorphosed into sea - girls in the chambers of the sea. The point of reference that defines this fantasy is outside reality as it is. This is hinted by human voices. Prufrock is in a reverie and when these voices wake him he realises that he is drowned. Drowned means damned in the religious sense which is rather indeterminate in this poem. He is the consciousness of being lost and in a submerged and hell-like

condition, having no hope of coming out into salvation of the hell. He says:

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

Thus, he realizes his own submerged existence. It is an existence submerged in his ego — a sea - burial analogous to hell situation and this hell situation is because of the lack of love and an impotent and diseased will. That is a kind of death-in-life. The lesson of the poem is that the purification of will, which is not possible in the case of Prufrock, is necessary to avoid a situation of eternal damnation.

In the poetry of T.S. Eliot colours are a mixture of personal and traditional symbols. But some of them are personal symbols. In this poem 'Yellow' and 'Brown' are personal symbols. 'yellow' is associated with a diseased situation. From the very beginning of the poem we find the situation. We find the evening 'like a patient etherised upon the table'. The evening is the image of Prufrock himself. He himself is diseased, and that is why the situation is unhealthy for the proposal. The desire for

proposal arises in his mind but it remains a fruitless striving of a weak - willed soul. He dismisses his idea of proposal and leaves it for the other time:

And indeed there will be time  
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street  
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;

'~~B~~rown' in this poem is associated with erotic temptation which is ambivalent. To Prufrock it is very attractive but it is the main cause of his trouble. Although he is incapable of proposing, he is attracted towards the

Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)

'Brown' is thus associated with sensuality here and also in the image of 'sea-girls wreathed with sea-weed red and brown'.

In the Portrait of a Lady the key symbols associated with the three aspects of love are — 'smoke', 'fog', 'music', 'lilac', 'park' and 'tea'. In the poem Eros, Agape and Charis are presented in the old forms but they are perverted by the malaise of the situation.

The poem introduces a youngman and a lady who have become friends through a common taste in music. When they return from a musical concert they go to the room of the lady. The atmosphere of the room is smoky and foggy. We find that Charis is debased here. Instead of sunlight and water there is smoke and fog. It presages the hopeless end to which the offer of friendship is destined.

It is the month of December. It suggests that the past of the lady cannot be revised. The lady is older than the man. The prime of her life is gone. She makes a desperate attempt to resurrect her life by having an alliance with the youngman and fails. There comes the cycle of the season from December to April to August to October but this cycle is an Infernal circling, as meaningless as the turning of the year. The resurrection is expected but does not eventuate.

The music of Charis is debased here. In music the soul of the composer is there and when the music is played his soul is resurrected. In this way music is associated with resurrection. The lady wants to resurrect her life. The conversation between the lady and the youngman begins with a comment upon the musical performance. They are only superficially talking about the music. They are not

affected by it because Charis is debased here. We do not  
hear the sweet notes of violin or any other instrument. We  
only hear

the windings of violins  
And the ariettes  
Of cracked cornets

and the 'street - piano mechanical and tired'. Instead of  
the music which is the food of love, the music in the poem  
is cracked and mechanical. The man finds close resemblan-  
ces between the cracked and mechanical music and the woman.  
To him the music suggests her feelings. Like the mechanical  
and tired notes of violin which is incapable of producing  
any good note the lady is also incapable of resurrection  
and revival.

The lady wants to have her 'buried life' 'resurrected'  
through friendship. But there is no garden for erotic  
meeting. Eros is presented in its debased condition.  
Instead of the garden of Eros the lady and the young man are  
sitting in a place where there are

Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead,  
An atmosphere of Juliet's tomb .....

The atmosphere of the room foretells the failure of their friendship.

Eros is presented by a stalk of lilac twisted in the fingers of the old woman. While the lady's tongue is wagging, her fingers are busy twisting one of the flowers, which suggests cruelty. The debased 'garden' of Eros is again seen in relation to the young man:

You will see me any morning in the park  
Reading the comics and the sporting page.

Here we find that instead of going in the garden the youngman thinks to go into the park.

Agape is presented in the poem only as an empty food-ritual without any communion and sharing. The lady and the youngman take tea together but they do not share the feelings of each another. The youngman says:

I smile, of course,  
And go on drinking tea.

The woman fancies in vain that she will succeed in hooking up the youngman and use his 'friendship' for having her 'buried life' resurrected and of feeling wonderful and youthful

after all'. She says:

'I shall sit here, serving tea to friends'.

The personal symbols which recur in various contexts in the Portrait of a Lady are — 'lilac, 'hyacinth', 'stairs', 'door', 'smile' and 'bear'.

Lilac is associated with the spring time months of April and May. These are the months of renewal and rebirth which are now seen as cruel. The nature of the cruelty reveals a profound development. In the poem the cruelty exists in the hopeless longing of the elderly lady 'To be wonderful and youthful, after all'. Her 'buried life' and 'Paris in the Spring' cannot be revised in the literal way that her offer of friendship disguises. The lady cannot regain her lost past. It is not youth that is cruel but the erotic delusions of age. Her hands give her away:

Now that lilacs are in bloom  
She has a bowl of lilacs in her room  
And twists one in her fingers while she talks.

While the lady is talking of the cruelty of youth her hands are at work



( Slowly twisting the lilac stalks )

The lady wants to forget her past and tries to start her life anew which the lilac symbolizes. The process of renewal represented by these lilacs is the death of the old and the birth of the new but the birth of the new is a very painful spiritual process inasmuch as it involves a weaning away from all egoism and self-concern. It reminds us of the opening line of The Waste Land .

April is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead lands,

Since the lady remains fixed in her attitude of egoism and self concern she cannot come into a spiritual rebirth. She remains longing for her past.

'Hyacinth' is a personal symbol. It is a flower which, according to Greek mythology, was supposed to have sprung from the blood of Hyacinthus, a youth beloved of Apollo. Thus it is a symbol of resurrection which is identified as such later on. But here its meaning like that of all recurrent symbols is indeterminate. It does give a dim or vague hint of some kind of renewal or transcendence, which is significant enough to disturb the self - possession of the young man and move his soul into

an undifferentiated but terrible uneasiness. The young man wants to distract himself from thinking of the lady by 'reading comics'. But his self-possession crumbles when the dimly evoked idea of resurrection and transcendence through love associated with the smell of hyacinths comes to him:

I keep my countenance,  
I remain, self - possessed  
Except when a street-piano, mechanical and tired  
Reiterates some worn-out common song  
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden  
Recalling things that other people have desired.

The personal symbol 'stairs' serves as the setting for arrival at, and departure from, an erotic meeting. It is imbued with a sense of success and failure. In the Portrait of a Lady the young man mounts the stairs with a kind of animalistic approach towards Eros. He feels sub-humanised as a result of his own attitude of experiencing and using towards the woman ( hinted at by the phrase 'Thou hast committed fornication' in the epigraph ):

I mount the stairs and turn the handle of the door  
And feel as if I had mounted on my hands and knees.

The figurative mounting on hands and knees suggests a kind of sub-humanization. It seems as if the young man

had become an animal. In this poem the youngman mounts up the stairs for the purpose of meeting the lady. She guesses he has come to formally announce and ritualize his breaking away from her on the pretext of going abroad. He is indeed leaving her after 'knowing' enjoying with egoistic gratification, her inner, private life. Which means he in the words of the Epigraph, leaves her and kills their relationship after he has committed 'fornication' or a kind of spiritual rape. He has come to make a formal announcement of his breaking away. But he feels being ill at ease, self-degradation, sub-humanization, the 'guttering of his self-possession', the desperate need 'to find expression'. The 'stairs' symbol is associated with all these feelings here. As compared to the emotional situation in Prufrock this marks an advice or a development with regard to the subtlety and complexity of feelings associated with the break down of human relationship.

Prufrock, the protagonist, wants to propose to some young woman but does not have the courage to do it. He is suffering from over consciousness. He visualizes a time when he would be caught between daring and not daring. And when after not being able to propose he would

'turn back and descend the stair'

Here, the phrase 'descend the stair' is associated with infernal despair and sense of frustration.

The lady wants to make the young man her friend but because of their difference of age the young man is not able to befriend her. Whenever she talks of her intensity of love the young man smiles. His smile hides his egotism, hard - heartedness, lack of feeling and lack of sympathy. He says"

I smile, of course,  
And go on drinking tea.

The smile of the man becomes heavy and indelicate. It becomes something as heavy as to break the other delicate things into pieces. It would certainly break the heart of the lady. He says:

'My smile falls heavily among the bric-a-brac'

The young man is very hard-hearted which is the result of his assumed hard - heartedness and proud insularity, which he calls 'self - possession' and egotism. His smile is a simulation and a chasm of insincerity yawns beneath it.

When the elderly lady wants to know the cause of the failure of their friendship the young man smiles:

I feel like one who smiles, and turning shall  
Suddenly, his expression in a glass. remark

At the end of the poem the young man broods on his right to smile.

And should I have the right to smile?

But this smile again indicates a lack of perceptiveness. It only indicates his egotism and self possession. Generally 'smile' is an expression of happiness but in this case it becomes an empty expression without any happiness. It becomes a camouflage mechanism for hiding the young man's lack of concern and feeling. It is just an assumption of a pleasant exterior without any feeling of real happiness.

'Door' is an opening used for entry and exit. In the poem it is used for an entry to meet the woman. The meeting may be for promoting emotional intimacy or for withdrawing from it on the part of the young man with his attitude of experiencing and using towards the elderly woman who herself has been trying to use him for her own wished -

for emotional rejuvenation.

'Bear' is a personal symbol which later on develops astrological connotations. The young man is unable to express himself. He does not know how to express himself, and in order to find expression he wants to imitate the expressive actions of the animals:

And I must borrow every changing shape  
To find express .... dance, dance  
Like a dancing bear, chatter like an ape  
Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance —

Here 'bear' is associated with endless circling or dancing in a state of perpetual uneasiness, indecision and failure to 'find expression', which is seen as something sub-human.

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## CHAPTER - III

Preludes presents the vision of a debased, perverted, exhausted and even infernal world where the three aspects of love — Eros, Agape and Charis — are also debased. In an ideal situation the world of Eros is a peaceful garden but here it is

The grimy scraps  
Of withered leaves about your feet  
And newspaper from vacant lots;

This picture of the world presented in the poem reminds us of the atmosphere of Dante's Inferno .

Agape has also lost its significance here. Food - ritual is in a debased condition. We find here 'smell of steaks in passageways' and 'faint stale smells of beer'.

The light of Charis is almost extinguished. Here the light is only the light of the lamp which prepares people for the sordid night. The music of Charis is only the noise of the 'sparrows in the gutters' and water of Charis is a 'gusty shower' which beats on 'broken linds and chimneypots'. The 'gusty shower' reminds us of the Black Wind in Dante's Inferno which blows in the second circle of

hell<sup>1</sup> and is associated with passions of lust.

In this infernal world every thing is in a debased and perverted conditon. Its inhabitants are also debased and perverted. They are leading a debased life. They are mechanically doing the daily round of their sordid activities. They are imperceptive, spiritually blind and insensitive. They are soulless. They are content with their daily life. The 'street' which symbolizes the way of living itself, here as in later poetry, is not a way to Christ or one which may lead to resurrection, salvation or meaningful life. Here is no hope of resurrection which is suggested by the 'lonely cab horse'. By contrast it reminds us of the 'white horse' which in the 'Book of Revelation',<sup>2</sup> is symbolic of resurrection. This is just an ironical reminder of what might-have-been.

The debased and perverted way of living in this infernal world is suggested through the morning awakening of a woman of easy virtue in a slum:

And when all the world came back  
And the light crept up between the shutters  
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,

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1. Inferno: Circle II; Canto V
  2. Revelation, 6:2



You had such a vision of the street  
As the street hardly understands;  
Sitting along the bed's edge, where  
You curled the papers from your hair,  
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet  
In the palms of both soiled hands.

The 'yellow' soles of her feet suggest the diseased, corrupt and unhealthy way of living. Here the woman and the street extend into one another or are mutually included. The 'street' symbolizes the way of living of the habitants of the infernal world which is perverted. The inhabitants of the infernal world, like the woman, are spiritually blind and insensitive. They are assured of 'certain certainties' and are leading a mechanical life without realizing human values. Their assurance kills the sense of theophany and makes them live in a godless world:

And short square fingers stuffing pipes,  
And evening newspaper, and eyes  
Assured of certain certainties,  
The conscience of a blackened street  
Impatient to assume the world.

The way of living of the inhabitants of the infernal world is not marked by understanding. They are unaware of certain phenomena of the world which remind the suffering and sacrifice of Christ who gave His life for the sake of human beings and took all the sins of the world upon Himself and suffered punishment for the sake of redeeming mankind. But

the poet-commentator feels an undifferentiated uneasiness generated by the ironical reminder of

Some infinitely gentle  
Infinitely suffering thing.

which is useless because if one has to live and work in this world like other worldly people one must laugh at the whole spectacle and live like others. Here the 'laughter' is sinister, being an attempt to dispel the painful 'notion' of 'some infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing'.

Like Preludes, Rhapsody on a Windy Night presents an Infernal vision. The protagonist is a visionary pilgrim who makes his journey through a city paralleling the first part of Dante's journey through hell which occurred between midnight and dawn.<sup>1</sup> He walks towards his room through the city of slums where prostitutes live and ply their sordid business. Hell is nothing but the world of memory and the contents of his memory are the 'thousand sordid images' of debased and perverted things connected with his environment. The kind of life emerging from the poem is the result of his probing into the depth of the Inferno of city life.

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1. See Dante's Inferno from Canto. VII - XI

The visionary pilgrim is an egoistic personality who sees things as mere objects. Kierkegaard's image of a man sitting alone in an open car with his back to the driver and knowing things ( as objects ) after they have passed him, suggests that the world of objects belong to the world of past or the world of memory. The world of memory would be an infernal world made up of mere objects. And we can live exclusively and permanently in this world of the past or the world of memory. But if we do it we should be in hell.

The egoistic person sees things as mere objects, and since objects belong to the world of the past or the world of memory, the world of memory would be an infernal world if it is a closed one. In this infernal world the objects are only the projections of the ego. This is why there is a fusion of various and even apparently disjuncted or irrelevant objects in relation to themselves and to the subject. This is what the protagonist calls a 'lunar synthesis'. Being an egoistic personality the memory of the nightwalker has lost 'its clear relations, its divisions and precisions', and has become a collection of heterogeneous fragments. Due to this attitude his world has become hell.

In this infernal world all the three aspects of love

are debased and perverted. Eros is presented in its debased form. Here the erotic encounter is with a harlot. It is only a sterile lust. In Eliot's early poetry women present the distorted Eros:

Remark that woman  
Who hesitates towards you in the light of the door  
Which opens on her like a grin.  
You see the border of her dress  
Is torn and stained with sand  
And you see the corner of her eye  
Twists like a crooked pin.'

This woman reminds us of the Medusa or the Gorgon whose sight turns the beholder into stone.<sup>1</sup> This woman whom the nightwalker sees, seems to be a prostitute because her torn and sand-soiled dress tells the pathetic story of her sexual degradation. This woman whose skirt is 'stained with sand' reminds us of the woman with muddy skirt in Morning at the Window. She is as in Dante, a symbol of the irrational because she depends on bodily attraction for her living. Whosoever comes under her influence has his reason petrified and is thus metaphorically turned into a stone. He cannot come out of the hell of her influence. This woman reminds us of the woman in the third Prelude.

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1. Dante's Inferno : Canto IX

The moon, which is associated with the woman, is feeble. It looks like an old prostitute who is soulless and mindless:

'Regard the moon,  
She winks a feeble eye,  
She smooths the hair of the grass.  
The moon has lost her memory.

The moon presents the debased Eros. It is affiliated to the moon - goddess, Proserpine, the queen of Deante's hell.

Here is no peaceful garden for Eros. Instead, there is a debased erotic situation suggested by 'branches' 'sunless dry geranium' and 'paper rose'.

Agape is perverted in this infernal world. The food-ritual is devoid of any spirit of togetherness, communication or communion. The inhabitants of the world are concerned only with the body and not with the soul. They have reduced life to the stimulus and response formula of the Behaviorists. They do not believe in the soul. Therefore, their movements become soulless and mechanical. They are like Epicurians who do not see beyond the life of the body. In Dante's Inferno the Epicurians are in the sixth circle of hell where they are burning in hot graves.<sup>1</sup> To them with

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1. See Dante's Inferno Circle VI : Canto X

the body the soul dies too. So, the inhabitants of the world who have denied the soul are leading an infernal life. In Eliot's poetry they are behaving like automatons. They are submerged in their egoistic concerns.

The cat is the symbol of the bodily concern with mere bodily life that the Epicurians believed in. The whole posture of the cat suggests the shrinking of all existence to the fulfilment of just one purpose, which is bodily gratification:

'Remark the cat which flattens itself in the gutter,  
Slips out its tongue,  
And devours a morsel of rancid butter'.

This suggests not only animalism but also mechanism. All her energies are synchronized to one purpose but her purpose is soulless. She acts instinctively and what she achieves is something rancid. Food - ritual does not involve any sharing or communion and this is the reason why there is seclusion, isolation and egoistic self-indulgence.

Like Eros and Agape, Charis is also debased. For Charis we do not find light - filled, music - filled air and restoring water. Here restoring water is altogether

absent, though the sand - stained dress of the Gorgon - woman reminds us of it. The music of Charis is reduced to the beat of the fatalistic drum. The light of Charis is only the light of the lamp and the light of the feeble moon.

The personal symbols which recur in Rhapsody on a windy Night are - 'wind', 'street', 'stairs', 'smile', 'sea', 'door' and 'eye'.

The title Rhapsody on a Windy Night presents the atmosphere of the poem. The poem presents an infernal vision of the world. The wind reminds us of the Black Wind in Dante's Inferno V where the souls of the Lustful are tossed forever upon a howling wind. Preludes also presents the same infernal vision.

Like Prufrock and Preludes 'street' in this poem is also associated with a way of life. The protagonist who experiences 'a vision of the street' speaks about the inhabitants of the infernal world. Their way of life is marked by despair, loneliness, seclusion, crookedness, meaninglessness, sinister and a mechanical, soulless and submerged existence:

So the hand of the child, automatic,  
Slipped out and pocketed a toy

that was running along the quay.  
I could see nothing behind the child's eye  
I have seen eyes in the street  
Trying to peer through lighted shutters,  
And a crab one afternoon in a pool,  
An old crab with barnacles on his back,  
Gripped the end of the stick which I held him.

This way of life cannot bring them out of their submerged existence.

In the earlier poems of this volume 'stairs' is associated with going to or coming from some meeting but here it is associated with ascending into a preparation for life:

You have the key,  
The little lamp spread a ring  
                                on the stair.  
Mount.  
The bed is open; the tooth - brush  
                                hangs on the wall,  
Put your shoes at the door, sleep,  
                                prepare for life'

'Smile' is associated with happiness, response and communion. But in the early poetry of Eliot this smile is crooked. In the Portrait of a Lady it is a posture which the young man uses in order to hide his hard-heartedness and total lack of concern. In the Preludes it is an attempt to dispel the painful 'notion' of 'some infinitely gentle,



infinitely suffering thing'. In the Rhapsody the 'smile' is meaningless, sinister, crooked and twisted:

Regard the moon,  
She winks a feeble eye.  
She smiles into corners.

'Door' is associated with an opening which is used for entry and exit. Earlier it is an entry into a new situation. Here the woman is coming out the door:

'Remark that woman,  
Who hesitates towards you in the light of door  
Which opens on her like a grin.

At the end of the poem 'door' is associated with the beginning for the preparation of life of which we have only an ironical reminder:

The lamp said,  
'Four o'clock,  
Here is the number on the door.  
Memory!  
You have the key,  
The bed is open; the tooth - brush hangs on the wall,  
Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life'.

'Eye' is a personal symbol. It is associated with perception. Earlier this perception is marked by blindness

and fogginess because of egoism. The 'eye' in Prufrock is indifferent, critical and cruel. In this poem it is twisted:

You see the corner of her eye  
Twists like a crooked pin.

This suggests that when the perception is twisted, everything in the poem is crooked, twisted, debased and perverted. The 'eyes' are incapable of proper or meaningful perception. The response of the child is soulless and automatic and this reminds us of seclusion, shutting up, shut in and shut out life. The child's existence is shut out and nothing comes out of it. The eye which is a channel for communion, for interchange of imaginative sympathy is itself blank. It is a block for communion:

I could see nothing behind child's eye.  
I have seen eyes in the street  
Trying to peer through lighted shutters,

The vacant eye of the child reminds us of other hungry eyes peering through the shutters of a lighted room which in this context becomes an image of frustration and loneliness resulting from an exclusive and therefore mechanical life of the body, shorn of mind and soul.

Originally branch is related to life but now in this infernal world it is twisted and lying upon the beach. Perhaps the beach suggests the sea which is the very source of life. The branch 'eaten smooth and polished' refers to the mechanisation and sophistication which is killing. Its twist suggests that the principles of life and love have been twisted. The absence of life and vitality is the secret of the skeleton of this world. The image of the branch leads us to another image of industrial and mechanical life. The broken spring in factory yard suggests the breaking down of functions and this means the absence of vitality and loss of energy. Rusted spring is only a form of devoid of strength and life:

A twisted spring upon a beach  
Eaten smooth and polished  
As if the world gave up  
The secret of its skeleton  
Stiff and white.  
A broken spring in a factory yard,  
Rust that cling to the form that the strength  
has left  
Hard and curled and ready to snap.

This is the picture of the sea of life which is ironically devoid of life and vitality. The inhabitants of this infernal world are leading a soulless life. They are living in the world of memory.

But memory has double significance. Memory holds records of the past and every person has memory. Only through memory one can redeem and transform the world of memory and therefore memory should be properly used. If we understand the meaning of the past we would be on way of 'liberation' and able to come out of hell, and

This is the use of memory:  
For liberation — not less of love but expanding  
Of love and desire, and so liberation  
From the future as well as the past. (F.Q.)<sup>1</sup>

Through memory we can be led to make a fresh assessment of our own selves. Such a judgment would incite us to undergo purgation, make perfect our will and work out our salvation.

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1. CPP, Op. Cit, p. 195

## CHAPTER - IV

Like Preludes and Rhapsody Morning at the Window presents an infernal vision. Here the three aspects of love - Eros, Agape and Charis - are debased.

In the poem Eros is suggested through the 'passer-by'. The 'muddy skirt' suggests that the passer - by is a woman of easy virtue. She represents debased love. She reminds us of the woman in the third Preludes. Her muddy skirt is reminiscent of the sand-soiled skirt of the woman in Rhapsody. Instead of the peaceful garden of Eros we find here the picture of debased area.

Agape is debased here. The rattling of plates in basement kitchens gives the idea of aloofness. The housemaids are leading an exclusive life. They are devoid of any sharing and communion. Here Agape is commercialized, mechanized, modernized and compartmentalized.

The sound of Charis is debased here. We only hear the rattling of breakfast plates. The water of Charis does not bring rebirth and regeneration. Here the rebirth is an ironical rebirth. It is the rebirth of corruption and decay. The souls of housemaids sprout 'despondently at

They are rattling breakfast plates in basement  
   kitchens  
And along the trampled edges of the street

I am aware of the damp souls of housemaids  
Sprouting despondently at area gates  
The brown waves of fog toss up to me twisted  
faces from the bottom of the street.

'Twisted faces' suggest the crooked and twisted life of the housemaids. It reminds us of the twisted things in Rhapsody.

'Window' is a personal symbol. It gives us a frame of reference for our perception. Through the title of the poem it seems that the poet is sitting at the window in the morning and looking out of it. He perceives the infernal vision of the inhabitants of the world.

Like all the smiles in the earlier poems the 'smile' in this poem is also meaningless. It suggests a mechanical activity. It is devoid of love and affection. It is sinister and senseless. It is a disjuncted smile which has acquired an almost independent existence. It is

An aimless smile that hovers in the air  
And vanishes along the level of roofs.

'Brown' in Prufrock is associated with erotic temptation and submerged existence. Here 'brown fog' again

suggests corruption, debasement and a submerged existence. This existence is potentially capable of regeneration, as The Waste Land will bring out. But here the regeneration is twisted. It is rather a parody of regeneration:

The brown waves of fog toss up to me  
Twisted faces from the bottom of the street.

The Boston Evening Transcript presents the way of living of the Bostonians whose liberalism is merely a pretext for living life only at the bodily level. These people do not bother about spiritual values. The aspects of love - Eros and Charis are perverted here.

Eros is debased in the poem. The sexual appetites are aroused as night draws on but here there are no 'appetites of life' between man and woman. Here the only appetite is for the Boston Evening Transcript.

The music and light of Charis is also debased which is suggested through the mounting of the steps and ringing of the bells.

The personal symbols which have recurred in the poem are - 'street', 'wind', 'bell' and 'steps'.



'Street' is here associated with the time. It is historical time. The Bostinians have forsaken past values. They misinterpreted the satire of La Rochefocauld. In the seventeenth century he wrote satire on the liberalism of Bostinians.<sup>1</sup> They took it literally and as a celebration of some desirable state of affairs. They lacked the awareness to understand it as a Satire. They missed the point of satire completely and took seriously what he had intended as irony. They did the opposite of what he had intended. Instead of reforming themselves with regard to their liberal way of life they deliberately adopted liberalism and made it into a creed, the creed of free sex etc. which is the creed of living life merely on the bodily level. They do not understand past values. In the poem old order seems to be changing.

La Rochefocauld's world ends with the handing over of the Boston Evening Transcript.

When evening quickens faintly in the street,  
 Wakening the appetites of life in some  
 And to others bringing the Boston Evening Transcript,  
 I mount the steps and ring the bell, turning  
 Wearily, as one would turn to nod good - bye to La  
Rochefocauld,  
 If the street were time and he at the end of the  
 And I say, 'Cousin Harriet, here is the Boston<sup>street</sup>  
Evening Transcript'.

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1. See Paul Harvey's: Oxford Companion to English Lit.p.438

'Wind' is associated with the spirit. Wind is an archetypal and biblical symbol of the spirit of the God and of its functions of religious inspiration, even of the bringing of revelation or gospel truth ( through the Holy Ghost ). But in the debased and perverted world of the poem 'wind' does not bring any spiritual message. Here the message is the mundane Boston Evening Transcript:

The readers of the Boston Evening Transcript  
Sway in the wind like a field of ripe corn.

The Bostinians are living life only at the bodily level. They are leading an unregenerate life with no awareness of spiritual values. They are merely vegetating. They are, therefore, like a 'field of ripe corn' swinging in the wind.

'Bell' is a personal symbol. It is associated with announcing the nearness of somebody. In later poetry this is identified as the announcement of the nearness of God (Cf. e.g. The Dry Salvages). The young man goes to give Cousin Harriet the Boston Evening Transcript. He rings the bell. The ringing of the bell does not suggest any spiritual announcement. It is only a parody of a spiritual message. The inhabitants of the world are spiritually dead,

when the evening comes they do not think about any religious work. If they do anything they only read the Boston Evening Transcript.

'Steps' is associated here with the meeting. The man mounts the steps to meet Cousin Harriet. In this world ringing the bell and mounting the steps does not lead to the delivering of any gospel, but only to the delivering of the evening newspaper, The Boston Evening Transcript.

Aunt Helen presents a parody of the biblical exaltation of chastity, for which purpose it evokes ironical reminders of the vision in the books of Revelation or Apo calypse. In Revelation we find a prophetic vision which celebrates the triumph of those who choose to remain virgins. They are attended by four angels. At the sound of the trumpet silence falls in heaven and disaster is prophesied for the people of the earth. Two figures associated with this vision of disaster are the harlot and the beast upon whom she sits.

In the poem we find a vision of pseudo chastity. All real values are inverted in the poem. Instead of the Virgin we have Miss Helen Slingsby. She is a spinster.

The poem is about her pseudo - chastity. Instead of four angels she is attended by four servants. When she died there was silence in heaven which is a parody of the silence which was after the opening of the 'seventh seal' in the Apocalypse.<sup>1</sup> The servants are not the true enemies of the Church but they are a simple happy couple, just as the virgin is not a true virgin.

In this debased world the three aspects of love - Eros, Agape and Charis — are also debased. Virginity in Revelation is associated with the pure forms of Eros, Agape and Charis. In the debased situation instead of the glorious choir of virgins there is an old maid and the noise of her pets.

The dining table has a religious significance. It is associated with Agape. But now it has a debased significance. Just as Aunt Helen is the reverse of true virginity the dining table is the reverse of a true Agape symbol. Similarly the footman and the housemaid are the reverse of the real enemies of the Church. They are just a happy couple who feel free to enjoy themselves now that

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1.     Revelation, 8 : 1

their mistress is dead and gone.<sup>1</sup>

And the footman sat upon the dining table  
Holding the second housemaid on his knees —  
Who had always been so careful while her mistress  
lived.

The personal symbols which have occurred in the poem  
are — 'street' and 'dog'.

'Street' is associated in the poem with the way of  
human history. It has become the way of time. The death  
of Aunt Helen seems to bring about an end of the world of  
time, similar to the one in the vision of the Apocalypse.  
What we see now is a parody of biblical vision. Miss Helen  
Slingsby who

Lived in a small house near a fashionable square  
Cared for by servants to the number of four.  
Now when she died there was silence in heaven  
And silence at her end of the street.

And the footman sat upon the dining - table  
Holding the second housemaid on his knees —

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1. Eliot laments the situation of 'indifference' in his  
essay on Baudelaire S.E. Op.cit. p 429 and also in The  
Waste Land, I and L.G. III. The most deplorable thing  
in this situation, as he observes, is that people  
are 'indifferent' not only toward good but also to-  
wards evil. They are not the true enemies of either  
God or the Devil. Hence they are, as in the case of  
the damned souls of Dante's First Circle of Hell,  
hated by God and the Devil both.

'Dog' and 'parrot' symbolise the frustration of Aunt Helen. The old spinster kept these pets because she pathetically needed company. They are, therefore, ironical symbols of friendship and love, particularly in its aspect of Agape.

Cousin Nancy is a type of egoistic personality. She is modern, bold, violently assertive or dashing, fashionable and romantic. Whatever she does she thinks it to be modern. Through fashion she wants to impress people. She inflicts violence on nature, on the 'barren New England Hills' by asserting her fashionable ways like riding. The notion of conventional decency and morality given by Matthew Arnold and Emerson is violated by the violence of persons like Cousin Nancy. Two contrary things are presented in the poem. On the one hand there is a 'dashing' modern lady, 'riding to hounds', 'smoking and dancing all modern dances'. On the other hand we find that:

Upon the glazed shelves kept watch  
Matthew and Waldo, guardians of faith  
The army of unalterable law.

These portraits are symbolic of conventional morality. But Eliot is making fun of both Matthew Arnold and Emerson along with Cousin Nancy. He is treating both of them iron-

ically. Just as he has treated along with Aunt Helen both the footman and the housemaid ironically. Here the implication is that just as Cousin Nancy is merely a 'go - go' girl rather than a truly immoral person in the same way Matthew Arnold and Emerson are not true guardians of the faith. They do not represent real, genuine morality. They only represent 'Victorian' morality. ( though Emerson was an American and not an Englishman, geographically speaking).

In the world of Cousin Nancy the three aspects of love - Eros, Agape and Charis - are debased and perverted. Instead of the garden of Eros we find here the 'barren New England Hills,' which ironically Cousin Nancy is trying to break. The 'garden' which is associated with a place for meeting of Eros is replaced here by the cow-pasture where Cousin Nancy goes 'riding to hounds':

Miss Nancy Ellicott  
 Strode across the hills and broke them,  
 Rode across the hills and broke them -  
 The barren New England hills -  
 Riding to hounds  
 Over the cow - pasture.

Cousin Nancy is a fashionable personality with all her romanticised egoistic aggressiveness. Agape is debased here in the form of fashionable get togethers and dances in

which there is no real sharing of feelings and communion.  
As for her dance,

... her aunts were not quite sure how they felt  
about it,  
But they knew that it was modern.

Instead of the light-filled air of Charis we find  
here cigarette smoke.

In the poem the personal symbols is - 'dance'.

'Dance' is an expressive movement. It is an artistic or quasi - artistic way of expression. In the poem the dance of Cousin Nancy gives an opportunity for the violent self assertiveness of her egoistic personality.

We find the 'dance' symbol throughout Eliot's poetry. The whole world moves around the still point which is God. 'The world revolves like ancient women/Gathering fuel in vacant lots'. 'The whole world of time is whirling in cycles of meaningless repetition. The unstilled world of time is still whirling in a cyclical dance like movement ( around some still centre ). The dance along the artery (B.N. II), on the level of the individual, and the dance of



Feet rising and falling  
Eating and drinking. Dung and death ( E.C.I ).<sup>1</sup>

on the social level 'Are figured in the drift of stars',  
on the cosmic level.

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1. CPP, Op. cit, p. 178

## CHAPTER - V

Mr. Apollinax presents the romantic, egoistic and neurotic personality of Mr. Apollinax.

The key symbols which are associated with the three aspects of love are debased in the poem. Instead of the garden of Eros we find here a palace where there are very important people devoid of emotions and feelings of love. Here Eros is in a debased form which is suggested through the personality of Mr. Apollinax. He has sexual desire but because of his egoism, social status and sense of respectability he is unable to express it. His desires are suppressed. D.H. Lawrence calls this kind of sexuality as 'sex in the head'.

There is no normal expression of his sexual desires. It can be known only through his behaviour. His behaviour always suggests some hidden meaning. This suggests his elusive personality.

The poem speaks of a party of very important people. Here people are talking and taking toast and tea. But this is an empty food - ritual devoid of any communion and shar-

ing. People do not share the real feelings and thoughts of one another. This is the reason that are unable to understand the hidden meaning of Mr. Apollinax's talk and behaviour. These things present debased Agape. Agape is reduced to the business of 'His dry and passionate talk' and 'a slice of lemon and a bitten macaroon'.

Charis is also debased here. We do not find light-filled, and music-filled air. But instead of it we hear the feigned and simulating laughter of Mr. Apollinax. His laughter has no Charis.

'Laughter' is a personal symbol. This poem is full of laughter. It is empty, violent, irresponsible and unregenerate. Like Portrait and Preludes here laughter is an attempt to hide the reality. It is deceptive laughter like Rhapsody. Here laughter does not provide true communion and sharing.

Mr. Apollinax has sexual desires but like Prufrock he is unable to fulfil it due to several reasons. His laughter hides his sexuality. He is a mixture of Frigilion and Priapus. He has sexual desires but at the same time he is shy:



behaviour which is a morbid self expression and self assertion involves a sort of violence to others. This violence generates violence in others as well. This is the reason why the man thinks of doing violence. The man and the woman seems to be parts of one another's abnormal consciousness. There is nothing wrong in man's behaviour because he is 'aware' of being involved with the laughter of the woman. He also feels that his own personality is threatened by her and that he is being swallowed by her and 'drawn in' by short gasps to be lost finally in the 'dark caverns of her throat'. Hence he reacts violently in his thoughts.

Due to this debased situation the three aspects of love — Eros, Agape and Charis are debased here.

We find in the poem an obvious eroticism. Hysteria suggests debased Eros. We also find that the man and the woman are not meeting in the garden of Eros.

Agape is also characterised here with violence. It does not provide any communion and sharing. Taking of tea in the garden is a meaningless and empty ritual. The man thinks of doing violence in order to stop the woman from doing violence. This is so because there is no love, and no understanding.

Charis is also debased here because we only hear the violent laughter of the woman.

In the poem 'laughter' is a personal symbol. Here it is not the result of euphoria or sense of well being. It is the result of hysteria. It is violent, sinister and . infernal. . . The laughter of the woman threatens to devour the egoistic personality of the man. It does violence to the man. It is shattering. It fractures the perceptual unity of the other man. And that is why the man feels that 'some of the fragments of the afternoon might be collected' if he could stop the 'shaking of her breasts'. It seems that the man is in danger of losing his own identity. He says:

As she laughed I was aware of  
becoming involved in her laughter  
and being part of it, .....

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## CHAPTER - VI

Conversation Galante presents the contrast between two contradictory attitudes. There are those who believe in absolute values and those who do not. This is represented in the poem through the man and the woman. The man, who is speaker, is conscious of higher values. The contrast between the absolute or ideal and the real makes him feel a vague uneasiness. It may be reiterated that in all the poems of the Prufrock Volume there is a vague uneasiness of sorts.

The woman of the poem is the representative of what is called 'the eternal female'. She is eternal humorist because she is eternally predisposed to one particular humour, i.e., to being pragmatic, materialistic and vain. She is indifferent to things of spirit and to what are called higher or absolute values, of poetry, art, culture and love, for example. She does not have balance. She is incapable of being serious. Since she does not believe in love, in absolute values she can only flirt. She cannot be expected to be serious in love. She is indifferent to the male companion. She has an imperious air. The protagonist rightly calls her 'the eternal enemy of the absolute'.

'You, madam are the eternal humorist,  
The eternal enemy of the absolute,  
Giving our vagarant moods the slighted twist!  
With your air indifferent and imperious  
At a stroke our mad poetics to confute —'

Regarding the men and women of this volume Genesius Jones  
has rightly observed:

'The men are chronically indecisive;  
the women are horribly pragamatic—  
Shavian women all  
'The eternal enemy of the Absolute'!<sup>1</sup>

Bernard Shaw is of the opinion that woman is merely the  
body where as man is mind, soul and spirit and that is why  
we find man, in this poem, full of poetry.

In this world where people do not believe in absolute  
values the three aspects of love are debased and perverted.

The woman is trying to evade the erotic response by  
saying to the man: 'How you digress!'

Agape is debased here. There is no sharing of feel-  
ings and thoughts between the man and the woman. The woman  
is unable to understand what the man says.

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1. Genesius Jones: Op. Cit., p. 91



Here the light of Charis is only the light of the moon.

La Figlia Che Piange presents an imparadising experience of love but the love is perverted and due to this perversion there is trouble and uneasiness. The three aspects of love are debased here.

We find in the poem a garden for Eros and the erotic situation is presented through the lover, girl, urn, flower and hair. But the Eros is debased on the part of the lover because he has become faithless to the girl. The girl represents the ideal Eros with

Her hair over her arms  
and her arms full of flowers

In The Waste Land we find a similar experience of the garden-situation representing Eros. The girl with the flowers reminds us of the Hyacinth girl:

Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,  
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not  
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,  
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

The lover of La Figlia Che Piange is also suffering from lack of communication and lack of response. He is unable to respond with love in the presence of his beloved. This suggests debased Agape. Due to his inability to respond rightly his midnight and noon's repose are troubled.

'Sunlight' is the symbol of Charis. The girl is asked to weave the sunlight is in her hair. This is very much an ideal situation but the ideal situation is allowed to slip for a moment because of the faithless attitude on the part of lover.

The poem involves a Lafourgian doubling of perspective. The poet and the lover are first fused in the beginning:

Stand on the highest pavement of the stair —  
Lean on a garden urn —  
Weave, Weave the sunlight in your hair —

The poet identifies himself with the lover and that is why he feels guilt and suffers uneasiness:

Sometimes these cogitations still amaze  
The troubled midnight and the noon's repose.

And then he detaches himself from the lover and the girl

from the second stanza onwards:

So I would have had him leave,  
So I would have had her stand and grieve.

Regarding the identification of the girl as a statue  
in an Italian garden Grover Smith observes:

'While Eliot was travelling in Europe in 1911,  
he visited a museum in Northern Italy possessing  
a stele designated, according to a friend who  
suggested that he take a look at it,<sup>1</sup> 'La Figlia  
Che Piange' ( 'young girl weeping' )<sup>1</sup>.

The personal symbols which have occurred in the poem  
are — 'stairs', 'eye' and 'flower'.

Like Prufrock and Portrait 'stairs' is associated  
here with erotic assignation. The lover - poet meets the  
girl statue by going up the stairs and then leaves her heart-  
broken and weeping. The speaker who is also the lover and  
the poet cogitates and contemplates on

Some way incomparable light and deft,  
Some way we both should understand,  
Simple and faithless as a smile and shake of the hand.

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1. Smith, Grover: T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays. London,  
University of Chicago Press (1956) p.27

The departure of the lover reminds us of the youngman  
Carbuncular in The Waste Land who after seducing the typist  
girl

gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit....

'Eye' is associated here with perception and reflection of feelings in respect of the weeping girl. Her eyes are full of pain, surprise and resentment:

Clasp your flowers to you with a pained surprise —  
Fling them to the ground and turn  
With a fugitive resentment in your eyes:

'Flowers' have the usual erotic significance, but the flowers are associated with heart-break grief and 'fugitive resentment'. Although the girl - flower situation is an advance on the Prufrockian erotic fantasy of 'sea - girl wreathed with seaweed red and brown', it is indeed at the core of Eliot's poetry. It certainly looks forward to the Hyacinth - girl situation in The Waste Land and later on the rose garden situation in later poetry.

# WOMAN AS A PERSONAL SYMBOL

'Woman' is a personal symbol in the poetry of T.S. Eliot. She remains usually critical and reductive throughout the early poetry—unless, as in La Figlia, a jilted woman is shown with suffering resentment and pain but having the potentiality of becoming—which she does become in later poetry—as the symbol of the grace - bearer and that of communion, and spiritual initiation.

In The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock the women are merely an object of desire for Prufrock but he himself is conscious of his lack of communion and the ridiculous remarks the women might make about himself. In the consciousness of Prufrock the women are very much humorists, critical and reductive. They are reducing all his romantic advances. They fix him in a 'formulated phrase'. Their eyes are very sharp and critical. These women are reductive and Prufrock is conscious of it. He says:

If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,  
And turning towards the window, should say:  
That is not it at all,  
That is not what I meant, at all'.

These women pose themselves as intellectuals. They 'come and go talking of Michelangelo'. When fantastically metamor-

phosed into mermaids in the sea, they signify the alluring ambivalence of beauty. They are fascinating and alluring Prufrock but indifferent and alien to him.

The lady in Portrait of a Lady seems very selfish and cruel. She wants to make use of the young man as an object for the virtual or emotional rejuvenation of her 'buried life'. The young man also uses her as an object. He commits a sort of spiritual rape by knowing her inner life and then leaving her which is worse than physical rape. There is a sort of murdered relationship between the young man and the elderly lady. The relationship is murdered by the young man. The elderly lady has been jilted by him. She has left him in a dubious situation. He does not know 'what to feel'. He is not sure of his position. Rather, out of his mean self - concern, he thinks himself that after leaving him in this dubious position if she 'should die some afternoon', would she not have the advantage after all'. And as for the lady, she is left by him, desperately hoping for the development of some desirable 'friendship' and 'serving tea to friends'.

The woman presented in Preludes seems to be a prostitute. She is quite sinister, but she is also pathetic. The consciousness of the woman is extended into the 'consciousness of a blackened street'. She reminds the poet of

'some infinitely gentle/Infinitely suffering thing'. But it is an ironical reminder of the crucifixion of Christ and of execution on the 'block'. The woman is also suffering but she is suffering in a different way and for different reasons. She may be infinitely gentle but circumstances have made her what she is. This woman reminds us of ancient women — even such Cleopatra, Semirawis - 'gathering fuel in vacant lots' which mean cashing on their beauty and youth and thus providing for the future wintry time of life. The world revolves like such women. Which means that this is the way of the world itself - practicality, pragmatism, prudence, expedience, cleverness, materialism.

The woman in Rhapsody on a Windy Night, whom the nightwalker sees, seems to be a prostitute because of her torn and sand-soiled dress, which tells the whole story of her pathetic flesh trade. The twist in the corner of her eye suggests her crooked and cruel nature. This woman reminds us of Medusa or the Gorgon woman whose sight turns the beholder into stone. Whosoever comes under her influence has his reason petrified and is thus metaphorically turned into a stone. She is a symbol of the irrational. He cannot come out of the hell of her influence.

In Morning at the Window we find bored housemaids.

They are bored with their daily routine of plate washing. Their 'damp souls' are like damp seeds which take rebirth as they sprout 'despondently at area - gates' where they get customers for prostitution for the purpose of getting some money and find some distraction from their life of boredom, frustration and drudgery.

In The Boston Evening Transcript Cousin Harriet represents the Bostinian way of life. The Bostinians are not fixed or firm in relation to absolute values. They have forsaken past values. They 'Sway in the wind like a field of ripe corn'. This means that their liberal civilization is now ripe for a cut - down. It has reached the ultimate possibility of its growth. It seems that the life of cousin Harriet and also of the other Bostinians epitomizes this civilization.

Aunt Helen symbolizes pseudo-chastity. She keeps pets in order to derive sentimental satisfaction regarding affection and companionship - which she herself is badly in need of.

Cousin Nancy is violent, self-assertive, bold, fashionable and modern. She does not realize that in assertion of her egoistic personality and through the exhibition



of modernity and fashion she is doing violence to others - even to the hills and cow - pasture which she rides across.

Like Prufrock the women in Mr. Apollinax are critical. They are interested in practical things and in themselves and that is why they are critical of a visitor like Mr. Apollinax. The 'slice of lemon and bitten macaroon' may suggest the acidity of the biting remarks of women who contemplate the personality of Mr. Apollinax.

In Hysteria the woman represents violent, neurotic, dominating and a devouring kind of personality. She seems to be violently devouring the personality of the man as she laughs hysterically. Her hysterical violence elicits a reaction of some murderously violent thoughts in the man inasmuch as her hysterically violent laughter threatens the perceptive unity of his own self. He thinks that 'if the shaking of her breasts could be stopped, some of the fragments of the afternoon might be collected'.

The woman in Conversation Galante is critical and reductive in a very general and philosophical sense. She is the eternal humorist reminding of the mythical Eternal Female identified with matter, materialism and life of the body. ( In ancient Greek conception she is the Earth as

distinguished from the Sky which was conceived as Male ). She is practical, pragmatic, materialistic and vain. She is eternal humorist because she is eternally predisposed to one particular humour which is the humour of materialistic, practical inclinations and of scoffing at higher or absolute values. She is indifferent to higher values of poetry, art, culture and love. Since she is incapable of being serious about serious things she can only flirt. She is reductive. She reduces man's sentiments, feelings, aspirations, longings and poetic effusions to something useless and mad.

La Figlia Che Piange is not only a fusion of girl and a statue but it is something more than this fusion. It is an ideal symbol of a woman who is potentially capable of being a ( Beatrician ) Grace - bearer and initiator into purification and beatitude like the 'Lady' in Ash Wednesday or other female presences in other later poems. But when her heart is broken by her faithless lover she is shown weeping and feeling resentment and pained surprise.

As a symbol of woman in Eliot she represents the might - have - been ideal, the human - divine, redemptive reality of beauty and love, even of its imparadising quality. But this ideal is badly 'torn and bruised' in the world of

the 'has - been'. And thus in La Figlia Che Piange the girl with her plight becomes a terrible disturbing figure. The tensional cogitations regarding what might have happened and what has happened with her.

still amaze  
The troubled midnight and the noon's repose.

—— stirring the soul into a terrible undifferentiated uneasiness.

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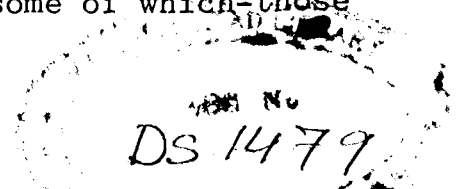
## CHAPTER - VII

## CONCLUSION

Thus, we see that the study of recurrent symbols is very important for a proper understanding of Eliot's poetry. Mere identifying allusions is not enough. It could not provide us with any key to the understanding of the poems unless we know the functional significance of the allusions. The socio - historical and intellectual background knowledge is also not enough because it would give only the secondary meaning of the poems. As to the primary meaning of the text of the poem, which lies in the text of the poem itself it would provide us no key either, rather it would either limit and reduce the textual meaning to the topical contemporary ( Post - war generation ) significance, or it would at best give only vague hints regarding the textual meaning.

To understand the primary meaning of the text of an Eliot poem we must consider the epigraphs which would give us some hints of the background thematic myth, and would prepare us for the study of the poem - and in depth too.

As we start focussing attention on the text we must be able to crack the symbolic code of the poem, beginning with mythical and archetypal symbols, some of which-those



associated with the theme of regenerative love - have been called Key Symbols. The other recurrent symbols through which the poet carves out special meaning in a particular context and proceeds to develop this meaning by using these symbols again and again in various other contexts. This not only saves him from repeating himself but leads him to pack more and more developed ideality of meaning in his symbols. In this way he is able to proceed to greater and greater concentration and intensification like a great artist. Moreover, it gives an underlying unity to his poetry - making all his poems one poem - which is again a measure of his greatness as an artist.

We have noticed that the meaning of the recurrent symbols, be they key symbols or personal symbols, keeps developing by the recurrence of that symbols in various contexts. Understanding the meaning of a particular recurrent symbol as shaped out by a particular context also implies understanding the meaning of other i.e not recurrent symbols, in fact, the whole pattern of symbols in a particular poem. Thus, our study has involved a fuller understanding of the text of the Eliot's poem.

We have also noticed that the development of meaning of these recurrent symbols follows a consistent and

developing pattern which is related to the constant and developing pattern of Eliot's central poetic concern with exploring the possibilities of spiritual regeneration through exploring the condition of the will which also involves the attitude of love or love. The development of meaning traces a forward drive in Eliot's poetry towards the regeneration of deeper and deeper and more and more intense meaning. This forward drive is impelled by a final cause about which Eliot himself speaks in his essay on Dante. This final cause is the attraction towards God, the Absolute Meaning. Eliot's poetry itself traces the exploration of experience made by the human spirit itself in its striving impelled by the final cause. Such an exploration parallels the exploration of the human spirit as traced by Ernst Cassirer. He has pointed out, in the context of the development of man's religious consciousness that in its striving the human spirit moves from the indeterminate, which are the two poles of the Ineffable, the former lying below and the latter above it. So in Eliot's early poems the meaning, as evident by our study of the recurrent symbols, is indeterminate, which also means that we are not explicitly and definitely aware that all the symbols are means of attracting us towards God, the Absolute Meaning ( cf. Dante's reply to St John in Paradiso xxvi ).

We shall here give a survey of the development of the meaning of each recurrent symbol in the early poems that we have studied. In these poems the meaning of the recurrent symbols is indeterminate but in later poetry it becomes infinite.

We begin with the symbol of 'street.' The general meaning of the street is a Way. This is its unchanging pattern of meaning. It is associated with the perspective of language and with the perspective of history. In The Boston Evening Transcript and in Aunt Helen street presents the way of human history. It is also associated with the perspective of religion. It emerges as the Way in the same sense in which Christ spoke of himself as 'the Way' or Christianity refers to human life as a Way. But in the early poetry this Way is clouded with despair, exhaustion and restlessness. In later poetry this Way leads us to God. In Four Quartets street symbol reaches the point of transcendence.

'Stairs' is used in this volume for going up and coming down from an assignation. The nature of this assignation is developed with the development of thought. 'Stairs' is also associated with the religious perspective. It is connected with the music and light of Charis.

'Door' is an opening which gives a vision of outward and inward world. It is associated with the perception. It presents the three aspects of the perspective of religion. In The Hollow Men the man whose 'concern was speech' finds himself at the gate of Hell.

The general meaning of the 'sea' is the sea of life or the sea of creation which in later poetry is seen as some thing stirred by the will of God. In the poem of Prufrock Volumewe find the bottom of silent seas associated with the mindless, soulless and mechanical creation. The bottom of silent seas suggests man's submerged existence.

'Eye' is associated with personal pronoun 'I' and with 'The natural wakeful life of our ego' which is 'a perceiving ( Coriolan ). But in the early poetry this perception is marked by blindness and fogginess because of the egoism of egoistic personalities. The egoistic personality is unable to see reality as it is in its unique individuality. In this case external reality is seen as the image of oneself.

In this volume eyes are callous, critical, foggy and blank. They are incapable of proper and meaningful perception. Here the eyes are also full of pain, surprise and



resentment. It is associated with the perception or reflection of feelings.

In the poetry of Eliot 'window' is associated with the symbol of eye. Instead of representing the simple ego 'window' represents the situation or 'frame of reference' which the ego finds itself. In Prufrock Volume this 'frame of reference' is filled with a sense of horror. Like 'door' and 'eye', 'window' is associated with the perception. It is a frame of reference for the perception and observation of the self. It also gives a vision and knowledge of the outward world.

'Laughter' in Prufrock Volume is not real laughter. It is only an attempt to hide the reality. It is meaningless, crooked, sinister, empty, violent, irresponsible and unregenerate. It is only a vain attempt to maintain outward courtesy.

In the early poetry 'bear' is associated with the bear ( animal ) but later on it develops astrological connotation.

In this volume 'dog' is only the symbol of friendship for Cousin Nancy and Aunt Helen but in later poetry it becomes a symbol of fertility.

In the poetry of Eliot colours are a mixture of traditional and personal symbols. In Prufrock Volume we find 'yellow' and 'brown' - two personal symbols. Yellow is associated with diseased situation and brown with erotic temptation.

The most important recurrent symbols in the poetry of T.S. Eliot are those that are borrowed from the last cantos of Dante's Purgatorio. They are the key symbols inasmuch as understanding them gives a key to the understanding of Eliot's poetry. These key symbols are associated with three aspects of emotions and feelings of love. These emotions and feelings of love which are described in his poetry can be indicated by the 'three words transliterated from Greek : Eros, Agape and Charis.' These are not distinct from one another but they are organically fused aspects of love. These aspects of love are presented in the poetry of Eliot through garden, food - ritual, light - filled, music - filled air and restoring water. But they are presented in their debased and perverted condition. Nevertheless the hints of the ideal, might-have-been situation are always present.

In the poems of Prufrock Volume we notice that the personages are irresponsible towards reality. They regard others as the object of their desire. This is the wrong attitude towards reality which means wrong love, selfish

desire and egotism. On the other hand right love means the attitude of responsibility towards reality and the affirmation of the otherness of things and persons. But since it means 'ardour, selflessness and self-surrender' ( Four Quartets ) it demands the death of the egoistic personality which becomes the 'overwhelming question' for Prufrock.

In the interior monologue of Prufrock, he visualizes himself wishing to propose to some young woman and not being able to do it inasmuch as it would imply the surrender of the ego. He can think of love only in the romantic sense. His love is not real love because it is not marked by 'giving', 'sympathising' and 'control' ( as the injunctions of the Thunder spell it out in The Waste Land ). He is incapable of proposing because of his romantic, egoistic notions about love. He is conscious not only of his physical inadequacy but also of his total alienation from outside reality. He is indecisive and has an impotent will which means that he does not have the right attitude of love. This right attitude of love would demand making perfect the will - which would be explicitly dealt with in later poetry.

In Portrait the elderly lady and the young man both have wrong attitudes towards reality. Both of them want to use each other as the object of their desire. She wants

the rejuvenation of her 'buried life' through 'friendship' and he commits a sort of spiritual rape by penetrating into her inner life.

The housemaids in Morning at the Window, Aunt Helen, Cousin Nancy and Mr. Apollinax do not realize the unique otherness of the other person in full knowledge of the present reality of the situation. They are only asserting their egoistic personalities upon others.

In Hysteria the woman devours the individuality of the man as she laughs hysterically. He is 'aware' of being lost in the dark caverns of her throat.

The woman in Conversation Galante is unable to respond with real love; it implies her inability to respond to the demand of her unique situation. She is unable to realize the unique otherness of the other person.

In these poems we find that the various aspects of human relations are explored - particularly in relation to the possibilities of the impotence, debasement, disordering and distortion of the will - which is also called love in Dante ( cf. The end of The Divine Comedy, will is almost synonymous with Love in Dante's image of 'a wheel in even

motion.'))

In Prufrock the protagonist visualizes that women 'come and go/Talking of Michelangelo'. These women pose themselves as intellectuals and Blue stockings. These visualized women compel Prufrock to think about himself and about his personal inadequacies.

The relation between the young man and the elderly lady in Portrait of a Lady is not marked by 'ardour, selflessness and self-surrender' ( Four Quartets ). It is marked by selfishness. Both of them want to exploit each other. They want to make each other the object of their desires. She wants to renew her life through 'friendship' and he commits spiritual fornication by 'knowing' her inner private life.

Preludes presents a prostitute who is sinister but also pathetic. She reminds us of Christ's sufferings.

The woman in Rhapsody also seems to be a prostitute. She is the symbol of the irrational. This woman reminds us of the Medusa or Gorgon woman. Whosoever comes under her influence has his reason petrified.

We find bored housemaids in Morning at the Window. They are fed up with their plate washing routine of daily life. Their souls are like 'damp seeds' which sprout 'despondently at area gates'.

Cousin Nancy is modern, fashionable, self-assertive and violent. She does violence through asserting her egoistic personality and through the exhibition of her modern and fashionable ways of living.

Mr. Apollinax is a mixture of Fragilion and Priapus. He has sexual desire but at the same time he is shy. He is like 'Priapus in the shrubbery/Gaping at the lady in the swing'. But his 'sex in the head' ( D.H. Lawrence ) makes him quite violent in his 'dry and passionate' intellectual talk at the parties thrown by rich, high class women. His violent attitude is suggested by the 'beat of Centaur's hoofs' ( cf. the Circle of Violence in Dante's Inferno ).

In Hysteria man and woman seem to be part of each other's abnormal consciousness. Both of them are doing violence to each other. She does violence through her self-expression and self - assertion. The man thinks that 'if the shaking of her breast could be stopped, some of the

fragments of the afternoon might be collected.'

In Conversation Galante we find the woman totally indifferent to man's thoughts, feelings and sentiments. He believes in absolute values while she is the 'eternal enemy of the values'.

La Figlia Che Piange represents an ideal woman. Her lover has become faithless. He is indifferent to her sentiments.

In Eliot's poetry we find 'woman' as a personal symbol. In Prufrock Volume we find two types of women. One is represented through the woman in Prufrock, the elderly lady in Portrait, the woman of easy virtue in Preludes, Rhapsody and Morning at the Window, Cousin Nancy, Aunt Helen, the women in Mr. Apollinax, the 'hysterical woman' and the woman in Conversation Galante. The woman in Conversation is representative of what is called 'the eternal female'. She is the eternal humorist because she is eternally predisposed to one particular humour, i.e, to being pragmatic, materialistic, self - concerned sharpish and critical. She is indifferent to things of spirit and to what are called the higher or absolute values of poetry, art, culture and love. She is reductive. She is incapable of being serious even

about the most serious things. She has an imperious air. The protagonist rightly calls her 'the eternal enemy of the absolute'. She is eternal humorist reminding us of the mythical Eternal Female identified with matter, materialism and life of the body ( cf. James Joyce's Ulysses ) from ancient times and even in Greek mythical thinking - where she appears as the Earth paramour of the Sky and the mother of the Titanic race - or in Chinese Jorythical thinking where she is seen as a principle called Yauf as distinguished from Ying.

But the other type of woman whom we meet in La Figlia Che Piange is the symbol of another and a different feminine potentiality that of being a Grace - bearer ( which is the literal meaning of Beatrice ), divine revelation, a personal sign of God, and the true 'other' the real beloved who is not merely a projection of one's own self, ( as Beatrice is for Dante ). Hence she is also the symbol of the initiator into states of purification and beatitude — like Matilda or Beatrice, again, and like the lady in Ash Wednesday. This type of woman has the potential of transporting the man in a state of Dantean stupor or one of imparadising experience. But in Eliot's early poetry this purifying and imparadising potentiality is marred by the faithlessness or lack of proper response of love. This happens in La Figlia and also in



the case of the hyacinth girl in The Waste Land. In La Figlia the girl is an imaginative extension of the statue of the weeping girl in some garden that Eliot heard about. The speaker visualizes himself as not only a detached observer but also a lover of the girl. The poem takes note of not only the beauty of the girl and the imparadising symbol of Eros, Agape and Charis associated with love but also broken - heartedness, pain and resentment caused by her faithless lover. Thus while she is asked 'to weave the sunlight in your hair' she is also asked to

Clasp your flower to you with a pained surprise —  
Fling them to the ground and turn  
With a fugitive resentment in your eyes:

The poem goes on to define her state of bereavement and grief which would be:

As the soul leaves the body torn and bruised,  
As the mind deserts the body it has used.

The speaker - lover thinks of finding 'some incomparable light and deft' way of leaving her. She compels his imagination many days and many hours and then he thinks he 'should have lost a gesture and a pose'. But he remains suffering with a terrible undifferentiated uneasiness as

he keeps cogitating on his imparadising experience and his own failure to respond with love and according to the demand of his situation. It is this failure that causes torment in his soul - which is perhaps an infernal one similar to that of the soul in the Dante's Inferno.

The poem La Figlia brings us to the central experience of man - woman relationship and explicitly suggests the might - have - been and the has - been and also explores a tension caused by their contrast. This is looking forward to the celebrated lines in Little Gidding.

Who then devised the torment? Love.  
Love is the unfamiliar Name  
Behind the hands that wove  
The intolerable shirt of flame  
Which human power cannot remove.  
We only live, only surprise  
Consumed by either fire a fire.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of this study it is but natural to ask what is the use of this work when there is no dearth of criticism on Eliot. Needless to say, Eliot is still a riddle for the majority of the readers. And this is due to his technique of compactness which causes various complexities. It leaves the reader with the sense of being

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1. CPP, Op. cit, p. 196.

perplexed and disturbed. Keeping this in view an attempt has been made to explore the symbolic significance of some of the early poems of T.S. Eliot.

Therefore, this study has many benefits:

It offers a fuller understanding of the text of some of Eliot's early poems through an understanding of the recurrent symbols.

Further, it aims at a fuller understanding of the consistent and developing pattern of Eliot's early poetry and of its forward drive and its final cause.

The study presents a consistent and developing pattern regarding Eliot's exploration of human relationships on the unregenerate and debased level. The tensions of the egoistic personalities developing towards the manifestation of imagined or real violence. The break down of these egoistic personalities into hysterical, spinterish or fashionable assertive conditons.

It also tries to offer a fuller understanding and appreciation of the underlying unity of Eliot's poetry - which should lead to a fuller understanding and appreciation

of his greatness as a poet.

Finally, this study marks a way of studying the text of Eliot's poems, and after equipping of Eliot's recurrent symbols it should help us in understanding the rest of Eliot's poetry, ( especially the Quatrain Poems which have not been studied in detailed as yet ).

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